

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 NSAE-00
NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 IO-13 ACDA-12 OPR-02 A-01
SY-05 OC-06 CCO-00 FDRE-00 MCT-01 CA-01 SCS-06
HA-05 /112 W

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O R 221257Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7207
INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM
CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER
COMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
DIA WASHDC
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 1542

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI, ASEC, LE
SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION, MARCH 22, 1200 HOURS LOCAL

REF: BEIRUT 1519 (O R 211340Z MAR 78)

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. THE CEASEFIRE DECLARED AT 1800
HOURS ON MARCH 21 WAS GENERALLY HOLDING AS OF THE
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MORNING OF MARCH 22, BUT PLO LEADERS HAVE PUBLICLY
VOWED TO FIGHT ON. A CONVOY CARRYING ABOUT 700 PEOPLE
AND INCLUDING SOME VEHICLES WITH IRAQI LICENSE PLATES
WAS REPORTED MOVING TOWARDS NABATIYAH. PRIME MINISTER
AL-HOSS MET WITH PRESIDENT ASAD IN DAMASCUS. THE
COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE U.N. PEACEKEEPING FORCE
IN THE MIDDLE EAST MET WITH FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS IN

BEIRUT. THE LEBANESE FRONT CRITICIZED U.N. RESOLUTION 425 ACCORDING TO RSO AND OTHER SOURCES THE THREAT OF TERRORIST ACTION AGAINST AMERICANS HAS INCREASED CONSIDERABLY SINCE THE MARCH 15 INVASION. END SUMMARY

2. MILITARY SITUATION.

A. AFTER A HEAVY ARTILLERY BARRAGE ON TYRE, ISRAEL UNILATERALLY DECLARED A CEASEFIRE IN SOUTH LEBANON AT 1800 HOURS ON MARCH 21 THUS ENDING AN OFFENSIVE WHICH BEGAN ON MARCH 15. AS OF THE MORNING OF MARCH 22, THE CEASEFIRE WAS HOLDING, EXCEPT FOR SPORADIC FIRING.

B. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS FROM TEL AVIV, THE ISRAELI BARRAGE ON TYRE WAS AIMED AT FATAH HEAD-QUARTERS. AP REPORTED FROM TYRE, HOWEVER, THAT FATAH HAD ALREADY ABANDONED THE HEADQUARTERS. AP ALSO REPORTED THAT THE CIVILIAN POPULATION OF TYRE WAS DOWN FROM A NORMAL POPULATION OF 50,000 TO ABOUT 1,000.

3. PLO ATTITUDES.

DESPITE THE CEASEFIRE, PLO LEADERS PUBLICLY VOWED TO FIGHT ON. FATAH OFFICIAL SALAH KHALAF ON CONFIDENTIAL

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MARCH 21 TOLD THE KUWAITI NEWSPAPER AL-SIYASSAH THAT THE PALESTINIANS WOULD "FIGHT THE ISRAELI ENEMY WHEREVER HE WAS FOUND AND WITH ALL THE WEAPONS AT OUR DISPOSAL." MAHMUD LABADI, A PLO SPOKESMAN, SAID THAT THE ISRAELI DECLARATION OF A CEASEFIRE WAS NOT ENOUGH. "WHAT IS NEEDED IS AN UNCONDITIONAL TOTAL WITHDRAWAL BY ISRAEL FROM THE WHOLE OF SOUTH LEBANON," HE SAID. BASSAM ABU SHARIF, SPOKESMAN FOR GEORGE HABASH'S PFLP, CALLED THE CEASEFIRE "ABSOLUTELY RIDICULOUS" AND VOWED TO WAGE A RELENTLESS WAR OF ATTRITION UNTIL THE LAST ISRAELI INVADER IS KICKED OUT OF SOUTH LEBANON."

PALESTINIAN LEADERS ALSO AGAIN MADE CLEAR THEIR DEEP DISILLUSIONMENT WITH THE ARAB STATES AS A RESULT OF THEIR FAILURE TO AID THE PLO DURING THE ISRAELI INVASION. KHALAF TOLD AS-SIYASSAH THAT "THE ARABS HAVE LEFT US ALONE IN THE BATTLE." NAYIF HAWATMAH, LEADER OF THE PDPLP, TOLD THE SAME NEWSPAPER THAT THE ARABS "WANT TO PUSH US INTO A DILEMMA BUT WE ARE ALERT AND NOT AFRAID OF THE ARABS OR OF ISRAEL." HAWATMAH ALSO SUGGESTED THAT ISRALI INTERVENTION HAD CAUSED FURTHER RAPPROCHEMENT BETWEEN THE LEFT AND RIGHT WINGS

OF THE PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT. "WE NO LONGER HAVE REJECTIONISTS OR ACCEPTORS . . . WE ARE ALL IN ONE POSITION AFTER BEING UNITED BY DEATH . . ." AP QUOTED A PALESTINIAN GUERRILLA IN TYRE AS SAYING THAT, "TELL OUR TREACHEROUS ARAB LEADERS THAT WE WISH OUR GUNS WERE TURNED ON THEM RATHER THAN ON ISRAEL."

4. POSSIBLE IRAQI VOLUNTEERS.

ACCORDING TO WESTERN MILITARY OBSERVERS, A CONVOY OF 19 BUSES CARRYING ABOUT 700 PEOPLE IN CIVILIAN CLOTHES, AND INCLUDING SOME VEHICLES WITH IRAQI LICENSE PLATES, MOVED THROUGH SOUTHERN BIQA' ON MARCH 21 TOWARDS NABATIYAH.
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5. HOSS IN DAMASCUS.

PRIME MINISTER SALIM AL-HOSS MET WITH SYRIAN PRESIDENT HAFIZ AL-ASAD, PRIME MINISTER ABD AL-RAHMAN KHLAIFAWI AND FOREIGN MINISTER ABD AL-HALIM KHADDAM IN DAMASCUS ON MARCH 21. THEY DISCUSSED A NUMBER OF SUBJECTS, INCLUDING THE ROLE OF THE SYRIAN ARMY IN HELPING MAINTAIN THE CEASEFIRE IN THE SOUTH, AND THE POSSIBLE DEPLOYMENT OF SYRIAN ADF UNITS SOUTHWARD TOWARDS THE LITANI.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 1542

6. SIILASVUO VISITS BEIRUT.

A. LT, GENERAL ENSION SIILASVUO, COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING FORCES IN THE MIDDLE EAST, MET IN BEIRUT ON MARCH 21 WITH DEFENSE MINISTER FUAD BOUTROS, ARMY COMMANDER VICTOR KHOURY AND OTHER TOP LEBANESE OFFICIALS. SIILASVUO WAS ACCOMPANIED BY UNIFIL MAJOR GENERAL EMANUEL IRSKINE
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OF GHANA. THE TALKS WENT WELL, ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCES, AND AS REPORTED BY AMCONSULATE JERUSALEM, BOTH SIDES APPARENTLY AGREED THAT THE ADF SHOULD ADVANCE SOUTH TO THE LITANI. SIILASVUO ALSO PROPOSED THE FOLLOWING PLAN OF DEPLOYMENT FOR THE U.N. TROOPS, ACCORDING TO L'ORIENT-LE JOUR:

U.N. TROOPS WOULD BE DEPLOYED ALONG TWO PARALLEL LINES: THE NORTHERN LINE WOULD BE ABOUT THREE KILOMETERS SOUTH OF THE LITANI AND WOULD EXTEND FROM KASMIYAH IN THE WEST TO MARJAYUN IN THE EAST. THE SOUTHERN LINE WOULD EXTEND FROM RAS AL BIYADA IN THE WEST, PASS THROUGH TIBNIN AND TAIBE, AND EXTEND TO IBIL AS SAQY IN THE EAST. THE ABOVE TWO LINES WOULD ENCLOSE A BUFFER ZONE.

THE U.N. TROOPS WOULD ALSO ESTABLISH OBSERVATION POSTS ALONG THE THREE BRIDGES OVER THE LITANI AT KASSAMIYAH, AKIYA AND KHARDALA AS WELL AS ON THE SHAKA BRIDGE OVER THE HASBANI;

THERE WOULD BE COMBINED PATROLS WITH THE LEBANOESE

ARMY INSIDE THE BUFFER ZONE AND SOUTH OF THE BUFFER ZONE IN THE FRONTIER REGION. SYRIAN FORCES WOULD HANDLE SECURITY NORTH OF THE LITANI.

B. SIILASVUO TOLD REPORTERS AFTER THE MEETING THAT THE U.N. FORCE WOULD BE ARMED WITH LIGHT DEFENSIVE WEAPONS AND WOULD HAVE "NO TANKS." HE SAID THE LEBANESE ARMY WOULD TAKE OVER "PROGRESSIVELY FROM THE U.N. FORCES AS IT REGAINED ITS STRENGTH."

C. ACCORDING TO PHALANGIST VOICE OF LEBANON,
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400 IRANIAN TROOPS, REPRESENTING THE FIRST CONTINGENT OF UNIFIL, ARRIVING IN QULAYAH FROM MATULLA THE MORNING OF MARCH 22.

7. LEBANESE FRONT CRITICIZES UNSL RESOLUTION 425.

THE LEBANESE FRONT MET MARCH 21 AND ISSUED A COMMUNIQUE CRITICAL OF U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 425. IN A VIEIN SIMILAR TO EARLIER STATEMENTS BY CAMILLE CHAMOUN AND PIERRE GEMAYEL (SEE BEIRUT 1539), THE COMMUNIQUE SAID:

"THE LEBANESE FRONT . . . PROCLAIMS THAT THE SECURITY COUNCIL HAS IN ITS RESOLUTION DEALT ONLY WITH ONE IMPORTANT ASPECT OF THE LEBANESE PROBLEM";

"THE FRONT REJECTS CROSSING OF THE LEBANESE FRONTIERS BY ISRAELI FORCES FOLLOWING AN IRRESPONSIBLE PALESTINIAN ACTION, BUT THE FRONT ALSO REJECTS . . . THE CONTINUATION OF THE PALESTINIAN PEESENCE IN LEBANON, AND PARTICULARLY THE ARMED PRESENCE."

"THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT. . . SHOULD HAVE ASKED THE SECURITY COUNCIL TO EXAMINE THE LEBANESE PROBLEM IN ALL ITS ASPECTS.

"THE FRONT DEMANDS THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT TO BRING THE LEBANESE PROBLEM BEFORE THE SECURITY COUNCIL AGAIN."

8. SECURITY SITUATION.

A. ACCORDING TO RSO AND OTHER SOURCES, THE THREAT OF TERRORIST ACTION AGAINST AMERICANS FROM LEBANESE LEFTISTS AND PALESTINIAN GROUPS HAS INCREASED CONSIDERABLY SINCE THE MARCH 15 ISRAELI INVASION. ARMED MEN ARE STILL SEEN IN THE STREETS OF WEST BEIRUT
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DURING THE NIGHT AND DAY. ARMED FATAH FIGHTERS, APPARENTLY AS A COASTAL DEFENSE MEASURE, ARE PATROLLING THE COAST ROAD IN RAS BEIRUT AT NIGHT.

B. ON MARCH 20 AND MARCH 21 ARMED MEN TRIED TO MOVE REFUGEES INTO THE AL GHAWI BUILDING, WHERE TWO EMBASSY EMPLOYEES HAVE APARTMENTS. THE REFUGEES AND ARMED MEN EVENTUALLY LEFT AFTER BEING TOLD ALL APARTMENTS WERE OCCUPIED.

C. MANY CLASSES AT AUB HAVE NOT RESUMED, AND ON MARCH 21 THE ARAB UNIVERSITY SUSPENDED CLASSES. ON MARCH 20 LEBANESE POLICE MANNING A CHECKPOINT AT THE DOG RIVER BETWEEN BEIRUT AND JOUNIEH KILLED TWO ARMED PALESTINIANS AND CAPTURED TWO OTHER FOLLOWING AN ALTERCATION.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SITUATION, COMBAT OPERATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BEIRUT01542
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780126-0386
Format: TEL
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780339/aaaabhak.tel
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Litigation History:
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Message ID: 6773c1bf-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 BEIRUT 1519
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3244976
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LEBANESE SITUATION, MARCH 22, 1200 HOURS LOCAL
TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI, ASEC, LE
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/6773c1bf-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014